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Lynne Mattocks Lucas

CBC Newsletter

for members of the Carolina Bird Club, Inc., ornithological society of the Carolinas

Volume 52 August 2006 Number 4

Sun, Sand, and Southeastern Birding at its Finest!
CBC Fall Meeting September 29-October 1
Savannah, Georgia and Southern Coastal South Carolina

Following the recent tradition of holding CBC meetings in excellent birding locales slightly outside the boundaries of the Carolinas, the fall 2006 meeting is scheduled for Savannah, Georgia from September 29 to October 1.

Recent meetings in Virginia Beach, Virginia and Augusta, Georgia provided superb birding opportunities just across the border of the Carolinas, as well as an opportunity to explore birding sites new to many. The fall meeting in the Savannah, Georgia area and adjacent southeastern coast of South Carolina promises opportunities to visit old favorites including ACE Basin and Savannah National Wildlife Refuge, both in South Carolina, as well as Tybee Island and Altamaha Waterfowl Management Area in Georgia, among many others. This should be an excellent time for passerine migrants along the coast, and most of the "specialty" birds of the southern South Carolina/northern Georgia coast will be present.

Our host hotel is the Holiday Inn Hotel and Suites Savannah Conference Center located at 17 Gateway Blvd., East, Savannah, Georgia 31419. The telephone number is 912-925-2700. There will be 45 King non-smoking and 30 Queen non-smoking rooms available for us. Please use the group code "**CBC**" when making reservations. The special meeting rate of $79.00 + tax will be offered only until September 15, 2006, so don't wait until the last moment to make your plans!

A wide variety of field trips includes Tybee Island, home of an historic lighthouse and often impressive aggregations of birds; Savannah NWR, home of alligators, waders and flocks of passerine migrants; Bear Island/Donnelly WMA; and the many others listed in this newsletter.

Savannah offers such a variety of natural, cultural, and scenic attractions that attendees to the fall meeting might want to stay an extra day just to explore. The Savannah area offers a travel planner, which can be requested by calling 877-Savannah, or navigating to www.savannahvisit.com on the internet.

From seashore birding at Tybee Island to "inland" birding at Savannah National Wildlife Refuge, from historical Civil War forts to lively nightlife, Savannah promises to be a true Southern birding paradise. Hope to see you there!

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Carolina Bird Club Bonus Trip Visits the South Fork of the New River

By Steve Shultz

Fifteen members of the Carolina Bird Club joined Audubon naturalist Curtis Smalling June 10th to explore habitat along the south fork of the New River in Ashe and Alleghany counties in North Carolina.

Leaving from the mountain hamlet of West Jefferson, we carpool to our first stop along Bill Bledsoe Road where it parallels the New River. While Curtis describes the habitat and possible threats due to the increasing number of second homes being built in the area, we begin to see some of the birds advertised in the field trip teaser. Elegant black and orange Baltimore Orioles shuttle between pendulum-shaped nests and wood lots. Rough-winged swallows swoop to nesting cavities in a bluff along the side of a feeder creek, and a persistent Red-winged Blackbird reminds us that his nest is nearby and to keep a safe distance away.

The New River drainage can be one of the best places in North Carolina to study Willow Flycatchers, and several trip participants hope to see their life bird today. They do not have to wait long. Several Willow Flycatchers can be seen and heard patrolling territories along the river at our first stop.

Birding the New River in June often means the opportunity to see a number of species nesting, and this trip is no exception. During our first stop, we are privileged to study Baltimore Oriole, Orchard Oriole, Willow Flycatcher, Northern Rough-winged swallow and Eastern Kingbird nests.

From this section of river we head east a short distance to the Wagoner Access of the New River State Park. For those wishing to camp while birding the northern mountains, this section of the park provides idyllic streamside walk-in camping sites.

As we walk from the parking lot to one of several short trails, soaring birds begin appearing above, circling on newly-created thermals. A family of freshly fledged Hairy Woodpeckers entertains while Indigo Buntings sing from nearby treetops. The campground bathhouse provides the next look at a nesting bird, this one an Eastern Phoebe housed under the eaves.

Curtis leads the group along a nearby trail where he recently spotted an Acadian Flycatcher choosing a nesting site. The female empid has just about completed her task, and all in the group can watch through the spotting scope as she adds the last touches to this year's nest.

Curtis Smalling describes the Acadian Flycatcher's nesting habits. *Photo by Becky Bateman*

Our next stop is along Fulton Reeves Road where we once again have the opportunity to watch Baltimore Orioles at nests, track down a particularly difficult to find Yellow-throated Vireo, discover yet another Eastern Kingbird nest, and find the rather messy-looking nest of a Cedar Waxwing pair.

After a picnic lunch in the park, we watch a male Hooded Warbler feeding nearby and chase a calling Yellow-billed Cuckoo, who obstinately remains out of sight.

Our next stop is along Garvey Bridge Road where the highlight is a Red-eyed Vireo on a nest just above our heads. In the heat of the afternoon, numerous butterflies flit along the sun-dappled dirt road as we explore the hardwood forest flanking the river.

From here we drive north into Alleghany county where we visit the New River State Park's northern most section, accessed from Duncan Road.

(*continued)*

A June Morning Birding In Valle Crucis, NC

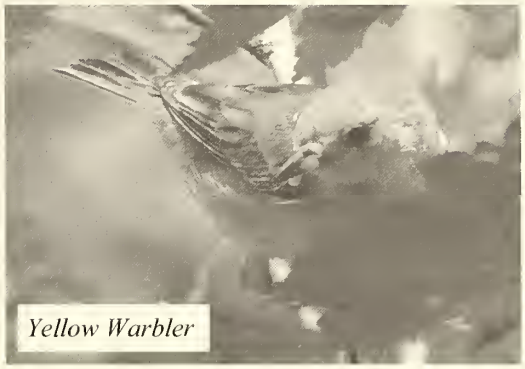
Story and photos by Becky Bateman & Susan Hubley

After a wonderful day birding on the New River with Curtis Smalling and fellow CBC members, who would have thought a visit to Valle Crucis the following day would prove so special! Noisy thunderstorms overnight left the morning a bit gray, but after a quick breakfast at a local bagel shop in Boone, the sky was clearing so we headed over to the community park in Valle Crucis where Curtis had clued us in on the approximate location of a readily accessible Yellow Warbler nest near the boardwalk. Driving over, we were thrilled with anticipation at the prospect of seeing the nest of such a wonderful bird.

Upon arriving in the parking lot, we were greeted by a Brown Thrasher scratching in the sand below some of the playground equipment. We wandered over to the pond in search of a Sora that had been spotted by others during an earlier birding foray. No luck – just some lazy turtles sunning themselves and a few bullfrogs calling out in their deep haunting voices. On our way to the boardwalk we spotted several male Yellow Warblers flying around low in the trees, while overhead a number of Baltimore Orioles flew back and forth from the Watauga River.

Once at the boardwalk we began our search for the Yellow Warbler nest and were having no luck. We began to wonder if something had happened to the nest, particularly since a three foot swath had been mowed just the other side of the railing. Susan, determined to find the nest, discovered a candidate rather low in a bush along the edge of the river. It turned out to be a large root ball from a discarded weed, but lo and behold she had the right bush! Higher up and deeper within the branches was the nest of our elusive Yellow Warbler. Curtis was right! The nest was readily visible once you knew where it was located.

After observing the female sitting on her nest, hopping about in the bush, and flying off only to return a few minutes later, we decided to snap some photos. This proved a bit challenging since we had to bend while balancing with one foot higher than the other on the river bank with our heads partially buried in the foliage of the bush. Oh, and while doing this holding steady so as not to disturb the warbler and praying all the while that the bee buzzing around the blossoms on the foliage resting against our faces didn't decide to let us know our presence was not exactly welcomed. Ironically, the warbler seemed to get used to us after awhile and would sit on her nest cocking her head while looking right at us only several feet away.



Yellow Warbler

Continuing on in the park, we saw many Baltimore Orioles and at least one Orchard Oriole flying to and from the river. There were also many male Yellow Warblers flitting amongst the trees and brushy vegetation, a few Common Yellowthroats were heard but not seen, Eastern Bluebirds flew about amongst the bushes and trees, while numerous Cedar Waxwings flew back and forth across the river. Flycatchers, especially Least Flycatchers, were also quite numerous in the trees along the river bank.

After checking out all the bird activity by the river, we moved on to the far side of the park where Chipping Sparrows and Tree Swallows sat along a fence. Many of the nest boxes located near the fence line were found to be occupied.

Eventually we walked back to see the Yellow Warbler nest again where we ran into a couple equipped with binoculars and a bird guidebook. In the course of chatting we realized they were novice birders but quite interested and obviously respectful of the environment, we told them about the warbler nest and offered to show it to them. The looks on their faces and expresses of awe upon viewing the warbler on her nest were priceless. What joy there is in seeing others gaze in wonder as you know you did yourself not more than an hour earlier.

We finally had to wind up our day, but before going our separate ways, we decided to check out the adjacent Mast General Store Annex and enjoy an ice cream cone. As we sat at a picnic table along Dutch Creek licking our quickly melting ice cream cones, Susan suddenly noticed a Baltimore Oriole nest hanging from some thin branches right in front of us over the creek.

(continued)

Valle Crucis (continued)

An adult arrived and the chicks started to make quite a racket. And why not? Mama had come with food! Here we had been looking for Baltimore Oriole nests all morning down by the Watauga River to no avail, and just when we had essentially wrapped it up for the day, here was a nest right out in the open with much activity. What better way to finish up a warm morning of birding than to be sitting in the shade by a gentle creek savoring an ice cream cone while watching a beautiful black and orange bird feeding her young in full sunlight?! You just never know what you will see when you least expect it. But then, that is what is so fascinating about birding and why we keep going back for more!

Tree Swallow
Becky Bateman

Where were you 10 years ago?

In 1996 the Carolina Bird Club held meetings in Nags Head and Fontana, NC and Beaufort, SC. Bonus field trips were to Holly Shelter/Topsail NC, Coastal South Carolina, Hatteras and Portsmouth NC, Mahogany Rock NC, and Cape Lookout NC.

New River (continued)

The steep road leading from the parking area to the river produces a stunning male Scarlet Tanager, an American Redstart and a variety of other woodland birds. Curtis brought us to this scenic area along the river in hopes of finding Golden-winged Warbler. Although we explored a significant stretch of habitat along the river and did hear a bird calling, we were not able to lay eyes on the spry black and gold hued warbler. The trail along the river does,

Red-eyed Vireo on nest
Steve Shultz

however, produce a turkey, more Baltimore Orioles, Great-crested Flycatcher, an impressive number of Canada Geese and a heard-only Warbling Vireo.

Thanks to Curtis for leading the trip and to all attended! If you are ever in the northern mountains, consider a stop along the New River. I do not think you will be disappointed!

New Members

B. G. Adams
Durham, NC

Michelle Brodie
San Francisco, CA

Jeffrey Catlin
Marietta, SC

Carolyn Cline
Cary, NC

Paul and Ida Frueh
Columbia, SC

Jack and Pat Meckler
Charlotte, NC

Bob and Beth Merrick
Coupeville, WA

Jane Morrow
Plymouth, NC

Peter Nelson
Moncks Corner, SC

Robert and Kay Ornelas
Lexington, SC

Richard Sasnett
Columbia, SC

Michael Szpir
Apex, NC

Amy Watlington
Matt Parramore
Weaverville, NC

Deceased Members

Wilma Abrams
Clinton, SC

Marilyn Bardsley
Murrells Inlet, SC

Bob Witherington
Winston-Salem, NC

Savannah Field Trip Descriptions

Friday, September 29

Half Day Morning

Trip # 1 Savannah NWR – 7:00 AM
Trip # 2 Skidaway Is./Priest Landing - 6:50 AM
Trip # 3 Victoria Bluff/Waddell - 7:00 AM
Trip # 4 Broad/Chechessee River/Lemon Island - 6:50 AM

Half Day Afternoon

Trip # 5 Savannah NWR - 1:10 PM
Trip # 6 Skidaway Island/Priest Landing - 1:00 PM
Trip # 7 Victoria Bluff/Waddell - 1:10 PM
Trip # 8 Broad/Chechessee River/Lemon Island - 1:00 PM

All Day

Trip # 9 Tybee Island/North Beach - 6:40 AM
Trip # 10 Harris Neck - 6:30 AM
Trip # 11 Western Jasper County Tour - 6:30 AM
Trip # 12 Pinckney Island/PR Mud Flats/Sea Pines - 6:40 AM
Trip # 13 Altamaha Waterfowl Management Area - 6:20 AM
Trip # 14 Bear Island - 6:20 AM
Trip # 15 Donnelly WMA - 6:30 AM

Saturday, September 30

Half Day Morning

Trip # 16 Savannah NWR – 7:00 AM
Trip # 17 Skidaway Is./Priest Landing - 6:50 AM
Trip # 18 Victoria Bluff/Waddell - 7:00 AM
Trip # 19 Broad/Chechessee River/Lemon Island - 6:50 AM
Trip # 20 Ridgeland/Nimmer Sod Farms - 7:10 AM

Half Day Afternoon

Trip # 21 Savannah NWR - 1:10 PM
Trip # 22 Skidaway Island/Priest Landing - 1:00 PM
Trip # 23 Victoria Bluff/Waddell - 1:10 PM
Trip # 24 Broad/Chechessee River/Lemon Island - 1:00 PM
Trip # 25 An Introduction to Nature Sound Recording - 2:00 PM

All Day

Trip # 26 Tybee Island/North Beach - 6:40 AM
Trip # 27 Harris Neck - 6:30 AM
Trip # 28 Western Jasper County Tour - 6:30 AM
Trip # 29 Pinckney Island/PR Mud Flats/Sea Pines - 6:40 AM
Trip # 30 Altamaha Waterfowl Management Area - 6:20 AM
Trip # 31 Bear Island - 6:20 AM
Trip # 32 Donnelly WMA - 6:30 AM

Sunday, October 1

Trip # 33 Birding Hot Spots - Time TBA

Depending on interest and the location of any rarities found during the meeting, there may be a Sunday morning field trip (# 33). Check with trip leaders at the Saturday night program for location and time.

Logistics

All trips will leave from the hotel. Gather with your leader in the meeting room. Please arrive 15 minutes before the announced departure time, and look for the numbered placard designating your field trip.

Participants should bring sun protection and insect repellant. All field trips will utilize carpooling; please let your leader know if you wish to drive and can take other participants. Please consider bringing adequate drinks and food (lunch and/or snacks) for all trips.

Special Note Regarding Savannah Spoil Site

In the past, CBC meetings held in southeastern SC visited the Savannah Spoil Site. Access to the site is significantly limited and at the time this newsletter went to press, access to the site had not been obtained. Accordingly, no field trips to the site are available. Should access be obtained, notification will be made via the CBC website at www.carolinabirdclub.org.

Savannah Meeting Field Trip Descriptions

Trips 1, 5, 16, 21 Savannah NWR
Savannah NWR features 3,000 acres of former rice fields that are managed for migratory waterfowl. These freshwater impoundments are flooded in fall in preparation for the arrival of a great variety of waterfowl. Year-round residents like Great Egrets, Anhingas, and White and Glossy Ibis can also be found making use of these rich feeding pools. By October, birds such as Northern Harriers, American Bitterns, and King and Sora Rails have usually arrived for the winter. Hammocks along the wildlife drive should yield passerine migrants. There is a chance of finding Lincoln's Sparrow and Winter Wrens. Trip Rigor: Easy - we will drive through the refuge, with short walks at each stop. Restrooms are available.

Trips 9, 26 Tybee Island/North Beach/ Fort Pulaski National Monument
Tybee Island, a coastal barrier island, is part of the Colonial Coast Birding Trail. The north beach, near Tybee's famous lighthouse, is a great place to view seabirds and shorebirds. Black Skimmers regularly gather to rest in flocks ranging from 100 to 1000 birds; American Oystercatchers frequent the area as well. Expect to see Sanderling, turnstones, Dunlin, Western Sandpiper, Red Knot, Black-bellied, Semipalmated, and sometimes endangered Piping Plovers. The north beach of Tybee is at the mouth of the Savannah River, where it meets with the Atlantic Ocean, and is a year round home for terns, gulls, pelicans, and cormorants.

Trips 10, 27 Harris Neck NWR/ Youman's Pond (Colonel's Island)
Harris Neck NWR, once a WWII Army Airfield, was established in 1962. The refuge's 2,824 acres consist of man-made impoundments, salt and brackish marshes, old fields, pine forests and maritime oak forests. Expect waders, ducks and shorebirds. Colonel's Island has a variety of natural habitats that support a diversity of avifauna. Youman's Pond is a freshwater pond found on Colonel's Island. It is an excellent birding site that supports an active wader rookery. Trip Rigor: Easy - the refuge is flat, and walks will be restricted to no more than a half-mile, driving from place to place.

Trips 11, 28 Western Jasper County Tour/Webb WMA/Stokes Bluff Landing
Along the Savannah River are several plantations which cater to deer and quail hunters. We will bird this area looking for Bobwhite, turkey, Red-cockaded Woodpecker, and Bachman's sparrow. The Webb Wildlife Center is an excellent spot for wildlife in the pinewoods and river swamps of the Coastal Plain. Stokes Bluff Landing may provide kites, several species of hawks, storks and a variety of herons.

Trips 12, 29 Pinckney Island NWR/ Sea Pine Forest Preserve/PR Mud Flats (HHI)
This refuge is a large island near Hilton Head Island. It includes a variety of land types: salt marsh, maritime forest, pine flatwoods, agricultural fields, brushy scrub and freshwater ponds. With 14 miles of nature trails we have a variety of opportunities to search for flocks of neotropical migrants. Wintering ducks should be arriving, and we may catch a Painted Bunting before they depart for the winter. Mud flats provide feeding and loafing habitat for many herons, shorebirds, gulls, terns, oystercatchers, and possibly an early godwit. The Preserve contains a marvelous mixture of swampy woods, marshes, small lakes, weedy fields, and pine plantations. Expect some short to medium length walks.

Trips 2, 6, 17, 22 Skidaway Island State Park and Priest Landing
Located near historic Savannah, this barrier island has both salt and fresh water due to estuaries and marshes that flow through the area. Two nature trails wind through marshes, Live Oaks, Cabbage Palmettos and Longleaf Pines, with chances to see deer, Raccoon, shorebirds and passerine migrants. Observation towers provide another chance to search for wildlife on this beautiful island. We will bird from the Diamond Causeway, and explore the maritime forest, salt marsh, fresh water ponds, and tidal creeks. Expect to see Bald Eagles, Osprey, migrating songbirds, Wood Storks, and possibly Painted Bunting.

Trips 3, 7, 18, 23 Victoria Bluff Heritage Preserve/ Waddell Mariculture Center
This preserve protects a kind of habitat known as Florida Scrub-flatwoods and consists of Slash and Longleaf Pine with a Saw Palmetto understory alternating with wetter areas of almost impenetrable thickets. We will scope the rivers and brackish marshes for gulls, terns, and ducks and hope to find migrant songbirds in the upland areas.

Trips 4, 8, 19, 24 Broad and Chechessee River Estuaries/Lemon Island
This trip visits a series of broad tidal estuaries interspersed with salt marshes. At the public fishing pier we will look for pelicans, gulls, terns, and other water birds. Lemon Island is relatively undeveloped and the sand flats and salt creeks along the highway harbor hundreds of shorebirds at high tide such as plovers, oystercatchers, Willets, Dunlin, dowitcher, and Whimbrel.

Trips 13, 30 Altamaha Waterfowl Management Area
This area is one of the best overall sites in Georgia, worth a visit in any season. The best bird areas are broken up into three sections. The first is the series of sometimes-flooded former rice fields on the east side of US Highway 17. Second is the part of the WMA north of the Champney River, on the west side of US 17. This area has several ponds and fields and a dike area good for passerine migrants. The third is the area south of the Champney, west of US 17, called Champney Island, where there are sometimes-flooded fields and a large impoundment with an observation tower. This area usually has water even when the fields are dry and is always worth checking. No restrooms available but are available outside the WMA

Trips 14, 31 Bear Island Wild Life Management Area
With 12,000 acres of managed wetlands, scattered stands of pines and agricultural fields, Bear Island attracts waterfowl, Bald Eagles, wading birds, shorebirds, raptors and songbirds. This area includes an observation platform, roads for driving, and miles of dikes for walking. Truly a must-see place. Look for Bald Eagle, Great Horned Owl, Wood Stork, and Black-necked Stilt. We will visit Bennett's Point Road for Barred Owl, Hairy Woodpecker, and rails. A good day at Bear Island can yield over 80 species. Primitive rest room and picnic facilities are available near the entrance.

Trips 15, 32 Donnelly WMA
The 8,000 acres of Donnelly contains one of the East Coast's largest undeveloped areas of estuaries and associated wetlands with pine and pine-hardwood uplands, bottomland hardwoods, managed wetlands and agricultural fields. We will look for Bald Eagles, Osprey, Wood Storks, Purple Gallinules, Anhinga, Wild Turkey, and hope for Black-bellied Whistling Duck. Waterfowl, waders, raptors, and passerines make Donnelly WMA a excellent location for seeing a variety of birds.

Trip 20 Ridgeland – Nimmer Sod Farms
The Nimmer Sod Farms are a recently discovered birding location comprised of several hundred acres bisected by many service roads. Logically, shorebird rarities should appear here in Ridgeland as frequently as they do in Orangeburg and the sod farms there. We hope to see Buff-breasted Sandpiper, American Golden Plover, American Kestrel, Killdeer, White Ibis and potentially some sparrows. Warblers and other migrating passerines may be abundant as well.

Trip 25 An Introduction to Nature Sound Recording
This course is an introduction to nature sound recording for beginners, as this will be a short show-and-tell of some of the many recording gear out there along with some CDs of examples of what you can do with the gear. This is a two hour course and a preview of a more extensive workshop to be announced later.

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CBC Savannah Meeting Registration Form

Name (s) _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Day Phone _____ Evening Phone _____ Email _____

_____Update my membership record with this address information. Remember to mail your membership renewals!

Friday field trip choices # _____/_____ Saturday field trip choices # _____/_____
AM PM AM PM

Enclosed is my check for _____member $15) registration(s), _____nonmember ($20) registration (s). My total is $ _____for the above registrations. Meeting registration at the door cost $25.

Club policy requires all field trip participants to comply with the field trips leader's assessment and requests concerning the physical ability of each participant to make or complete the trip.

I release and discharge (and will not make a claim against) Carolina Bird Club for injury, death, or property damage arising from my participation at this meeting and Club field trips. This release of liability is entered into on behalf of all members of my family, including all minors accompanying me. I certify that I am the parent or legal guardian of any such minors and that I am over 18 years of age.

Signature_____Date_____Signature_____Date _____

Make check payable to Carolina Bird Club and send to: CBC, 353 Montabello, Bloomingdale, IL 60108.

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Upcoming CBC Meetings

Nags Head, NC January 26-28, 2007
Western NC - Spring 2007

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